AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS
NEWSLETTER

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS

GPO Box 1251L
Melbourne, Victoria 3001

OFFICE BEARERS FOR 1991

PRESIDENT:	Max McMASTER	Phone 418 7335
VICE-PRESIDENT:	George LEVICK	Phone 418 7344
SECRETARY:	Ian ODGERS	Phone 418 7275
TREASURER:	Joyce KORN	Phone 606 9610
COMMITTEE:	Rosemary COTTER	Phone 660 2063
	Isabelle MENTHA	Phone 418 7222
	Josephine McGOVERN	Phone 596 7344

Ex Officio: Chair, Panel of Assessors   John SIMKIN

Editor, *Newsletter*   Helen KINNIBURGH

Membership of the Society is open to persons and institutions engaged in indexing or interested in promoting the objects of the Society. The annual subscription, due on 1 January each year, is $20; a half-yearly subscription for entry after 1 July is $10.

Those wishing to know more about the Society should write to The Secretary of the Society at the above address or telephone a committee member.

This publication is indexed and abstracted by the Australian Clearing House for Library and Information Science for *Australian education index and Library and information science abstracts*.

ANNUAL REPORT

Membership decreased from 205 at 1 January 1990, to 188 at 31 December 1990, a nett loss of 17 members.

As in previous years, actual membership showed quite a lot of change. Twenty-two members joined but 39 previous members were lost, 10 through resignation, death or unnotified change of address and 29 through non-renewal of subscriptions.

Geographic distribution of members as at 31 Dec. is:

ACT	16
NSW	55
NT	2
QLD	7
SA	6
TAS	1
VIC	96
WA	3
NZ	2
	188

The Newsletter also has nine Australian and five overseas subscribers and exchange or complimentary copies are sent to 11 Australian and seven overseas organisations with interests related to the Society, most of whom reciprocate with their own newsletters.

In 1990, 117 members took advantage of the reduced subscription price for *The Indexer* made available to members of affiliated Societies by The Society of Indexers.

The 1990 Annual General Meeting was held on 6 March at Cafe Tasma in the Victorian headquarters of the National Trust of Australia in East Melbourne. Nineteen members attended. A motion amending the constitution to facilitate the formation and operation of branches was carried.

As a result of this change to the constitution, a NSW Branch of the Society was established following a general meeting of NSW members in Sydney on 8 August 1990. The major office bearers elected were: Garry Cousins - President; Michael Wyatt - Treasurer; and Christine Winning - Secretary.

Society of Indexers Conference

Three of our members travelled to Edinburgh for the Society of Indexers Conference in Edinburgh, from 6-8 April, 1990. Josephine McGovern chaired one session, whilst John Simkin and Garry Cousins were actively involved in the discussions. All agreed that the trip was worthwhile, but particularly beneficial for showing the British that indexing is alive and well 'down under'. Actually the Australian contingent must have impressed them all greatly as the photograph in *The Indexer* clearly indicates.

Newsletter

The Newsletter continued to be an important means of communication for far flung Australian and NZ members. The Editor, Geraldine Suter, unfortunately received very little copy during the year making production of the quarterly issues difficult. As was announced in the December issue, the newsletter will change in both format and frequency from the beginning of 1991, with the introduction of a monthly 'newsletter style' production which is less formal and more newsy. Coinciding with this change has been a change of Editor, with Geraldine stepping down after 6 years with us for which we are most appreciative. We now welcome the arrival of Helen Kinniburgh to take her place.

Indexers available

Indexers available which was scheduled for publication during 1990 unfortunately failed to materialise. Many factors contributed to the delays in production, however everything is now back on schedule and the new edition is expected to be published early in 1991. Newly registered indexers will be noted appropriately in the updated list.

AusSI Medal

The Medal dinner took place at Graduate House, University of Melbourne on 21 November 1990.

This year the panel consisted of John Arnold as Chair, George Levick and Cherryl Schauder. Due to work commitments Cherryl was forced to drop out, leaving the task to John and George. After a thorough assessment of the entries it was decided not to award the medal. To quote from the Chairperson's, report: "...although we believed that there were some good indexes submitted including two very good ones, there was no outstanding one amongst them. We were both of the opinion that the Australian Society of Indexers Medal is an award of some standing in the profession and one which should only be given to an outstanding index".

Two indexes were given special commendations. Elmar Zalums' index to *Australia's Commonwealth Parliament, 1901-1988: ten perspectives*, and Max McMaster's index to the proceedings of the Fourth International Kimberlite Conference held in Perth in 1986, published in two volumes as *Kimberlites and related rocks*.

The Medal dinner was followed by a delightful slide presentation from Dorothy and Victor Prescott on their trip to China and Tibet.

During 1990 members saw with interest the account of the proceedings and photographs from our 1989 medal dinner published in *The Indexer*.

Seminars/Workshops/Meetings

A most successful meeting was held in Melbourne on 24 July when Dorothy Prescott gave an informative talk on map indexing. Her talk covered indexing of maps in books, indexing of atlases and street direc-

STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE   JANUARY – DECEMBER 1990

Expenditure	$
Membership –	
National Book Council	50.00
Newsletter expenses	1,404.27
The Indexer subscriptions	2,432.22
Registration Certificates	181.90
Stationery	226.95
Sydney Conference expenses	1,086.42
Annual General Meeting Dinner	722.00
Notices/Sub renewals	77.56
Medal Dinner	483.92
NSW Branch establishment grant	500.00
Hon. Secretary expenses	48.18
Notices - Course/Medal/	
Overdue subscriptions	170.01
Hon. Treasurer expenses	29.85
Refunds	163.00
Index 4	192.82
Bank & Government charges	40.89
GPO Box rental and phone listing	163.00
Meeting expenses	69.72
	$8,042.71
Operating Surplus for 1990	$912.53

Income	$
Memberships	3,704.00
Newsletter Subscriptions	–
The Indexer	2,394.00
Registration Fees	180.00
Indexers available	10.00
Refunds	163.00
Index 4	540.00
Annual General Meeting Dinner	570.00
Medal Dinner	450.00
Interest - Bank account	66.04
Bank of Melbourne -	
- at Call	16.12
- Fixed Term (1)	178.12
- Fixed Term (2)	361.17
Capital Building Society	
- Fixed Term	322.79
	$8,955.24

Balance Sheet	$
Cash in Bank 1 Jan. 1990	1,542.94
Bank of Melbourne -	
- at Call	268.78
- Fixed Term (1)	1,080.21
- Fixed Term (2)	2,249.70
Capital Building Society	
- Fixed Term	1,925.75
Assets as at 1 Jan. 1990	7,067.38
Plus Income	8,955.24
	16,022.62
Less Expenditure	8,042.71
Assets as at 31 Dec. 1990	$7,979.91

Assets as at 31 December 1990	$
Cash in Bank	1,577.27
Bank of Melbourne	
- at Call	284.90
- Fixed Term (1)	1,258.33
- Fixed Term (2)	2,610.87
Capital Building Society	
- Fixed Term	2,248.54
	$7,979.91

tories as well as details about forms of place names, qualification of names, historical names, orthography, etc.

A Seminar/Workshop on Database Indexing was organised in conjunction with the Australian Database Development Association (ADDA). Due to some logistical problems the seminar did not eventuate but will be rescheduled in 1991.

Our Sydney counterparts however, were far more successful with their "Introduction to Book Indexing" course held during August and September 1990 at the University of New South Wales. The course attracted some 30 participants and was obviously well received. Congratulations to Alan Walker and Michael Wyatt on a job well done.

On 4 December 1990 the Society conducted a meeting entitled: "Information exchange on future educational and training needs of indexers". The meeting held in Sydney comprised Garry Cousins, Michael Wyatt and Alan Walker, all from the NSW Branch, Rosemary Cotter, John Simkin (convenor) and Max McMaster from the National Executive, together with three academics - Connie Wilson (University of NSW, School of Library and Information Management), Allan Hall (Kuringai CAE) and Pam Naylor (Box Hill College of TAFE), plus Elizabeth Wallis, Registrar, Society of Indexers (UK). The day was most productive and resulted in some clear objectives as to how our Society should proceed in the indexing education field.

Following on the day's discussion an inaugural meeting between some members of the NSW Branch and the National Executive was held which culminated in some very useful suggestions which will be used during the next twelve months.

Elizabeth Wallis during her stay in Australia also addressed a NSW Branch meeting on the criteria for the registration of indexers in the UK, as well as on vocational education in the UK. The meeting on 5 December was well received by the 17 attendees.

Assessment of Indexes for Registration

Thirteen indexes were submitted for assessment with twelve being successful. We thank Josephine McGovern and from July onwards John Simkin for their work in Chairing the Panel of Assessors.

In thanking all the members of the Committee and our Editor, I specially thank the Secretary, Ian Odgers and the Treasurer, Joyce Korn, who have guaranteed the continuity of our work as the Australian Society of Indexers. With our new-format Newsletter we look forward to spreading the message in 1991, and wish all our members every success in their indexing endeavours.

Max McMaster
President

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF INDEXERS
MEMBERSHIP MARCH 1991

Privacy Respected

Privacy Respected

Privacy Respected

Privacy Respected

Privacy Respected

Privacy Respected

Privacy Respected

Privacy Respected

NEW MEMBERS

The Society welcomes the following new members

Mr J. Bangsund, PO Box 80,
   West Brunswick, Vic 3055

Mr R. Brooks, 19 Cowper Street, Brighton Vic 3186

Mrs E. Ellis, 40 Seaview Avenue, Taroona Tas 7053

Mrs M. Healey, 4/26 Hazelbank Road,
   Wollstonecraft NSW 2065

Ms N. Heine C/o National Mutual, 3rd Floor,
   GPO Box 2830AA, Melbourne Vic 3001

Mrs K. Leneghan, 27 St. Vincent Place, Albert Park,
   Vic 3206 (re-joining)

Mrs R. Keenan, 4 Young Street, Croydon, NSW 2132

Mrs M. Nestor, 16 Tindale Road, Artarmon,
   NSW 2064

Mr D. Stephensen, 21 Spring Gully Road,
   Bendigo, Vic 3550

HOW TO COST AND QUOTE FOR AN INDEX

The following is the text of a talk given by Garry Cousins to the March 13 meeting of the NSW Branch of the Society. The talk is in two parts: the first discusses methods of costing, the second, relations with publishers in regard to costing.

I. METHODS OF COSTING:

There is probably no issue more contentious in freelance indexing than that of quoting for an index; certainly no issue seems to generate as many anecdotes. Many indexers, it seems, are happy to talk at length about such matters as sub-headings, or run-on versus indented layout, but can be surprisingly coy when it comes to matters of pricing and costing.

However, I think it is to our benefit as professional indexers to discuss and examine the subject thoroughly, since gross differences in quoting on the part of members can only reflect badly on the profession as a whole. One of the hallmarks of a profession, it seems to me, is a pricing structure for services rendered, and, in particular, the setting of minimum fees for those services, even though this structure is as often as not only a guideline which members of the profession are free to accept or vary as they see fit.

When we go to a dentist, for example, we can expect some sort of pricing structure: a crown will cost approximately $x, an X-ray might cost $y, and a filling might cost $z. Now, the price for a filling may vary somewhat from dentist to dentist, but even so we could expect to pay, say, $30-40 per filling as a rough guide.

True, some dentists may charge $80 for a filling, but precisely because there is some sort of pricing structure in place we know immediately that such a dentist is relatively expensive. Similarly, if we were to find a dentist who only charged $10 for a filling, we would know that that dentist was very cheap indeed and it might also make us wonder about the dentist's competence. Indexers at present have no such guidelines, beyond the Society's recommended hourly

rate, of course, and one issue I would like to raise this evening for discussion is whether or not such guidelines are feasible.

Michael Wyatt has suggested that it may be possible to construct a formula for costing indexes. Originally, his idea was that given these variables:

a) the density of a text (measured by the Gunning-Fogg index or some such test of difficulty)

b) The number of entries required

c) The number of pages in a book

it should be possible to concoct a formula which will be universal in the sense that it is applicable to any book, regardless of length or difficulty. He has since revised this idea and (correct me if I am wrong, Michael) now thinks that the main variable on which to base such a formula should be the number of page references or locators in an index. I think his ideas deserve closer scrutiny, and would be interested to hear what you think of them.

Until such a formula is devised, however, we shall have to rely on more traditional methods of costing our indexes. So, what are these methods? I can think of three at least, but there may be more, and if you use a method which I do not mention, or you use a modified version of a method I mention, please share it with the rest of us: you may be using the definitive method which the rest of us are all looking for!

The three methods I can think of are:

- costing by using an hourly rate
- costing by number of entries
- costing by number of pages in the index

I should make it immediately clear that I do not have personal experience of all three methods. I intend to spend most of my time tonight talking about the first method, since it is the one I use, and so the one with which I am most familiar. As for the others, they are either methods I know other indexers use, or methods suggested in the literature on the subject, scant as it is.

Costing by using an hourly rate

First, let's look at the method of preparing an estimate using an hourly rate. Now, this is not the same as telling an editor what your hourly rate is. I know some indexers prefer to quote for the job as a whole, and baulk at giving editors an hourly rate. As it happens, I don't mind telling editors my hourly rate, and have personally found that many editors are happier if I do so. But I know other indexers have had the opposite experience, so I cannot offer what I do as any sort of rule. I would be interested to hear of your experiences in this regard.

Anyway, let me go through the procedure I use to prepare an estimate step by step. I am assuming that

the editor has sent me the page proofs and asked me to contact him or her as soon as I have been able to work out a quote.

First, I look through the page proofs to get a general idea of the book. I study the contents pages and try to ascertain whether the text is of the same density throughout, or whether some chapters are more detailed than others, or whether some chapters contain far more names than others, and so will require more time to index.

Second, having got a general idea of the book, I pick a representative chapter or section of the book, and index it completely. If, say, the book is 200 pages long, I might pick a chapter which is 20 pages long to index as a sample. I usually seem to pick a chapter or section which represents about 10% of the total text, though not always. But a sample this size seems to give me a more accurate idea of the total job than a smaller sample might.

Indexing the sample completely involves:
   a)   marking up the text
   b)   typing the entries into the computer
   c)   editing and checking the sample
   d)   printing the sample

Now, say it takes me two hours to mark up, type, edit and print a sample of 20 pages. I then extrapolate from the time it has taken to do the sample to get a rough idea of how long the entire book will take. In this case, if the sample I have chosen is 10% of the text, the total time involved will be:

2 hours x 10 = 20 hours

Now, this is only a rough estimate; it is not an accurate estimate of the real number of hours necessary to compile the entire index because if fails to take into account two things which cannot really be gauged from the sample:

   a)   the time involved in constructing a cross-reference structure; ie. deciding on preferred terms and inserting *see* and *see also* references from non-preferred terms
   b)   the editing time

It is a fact, for me at least, that the editing time for the total index will far exceed the editing time for the sample, merely multiplied by ten. The total index will require far more editorial decisions, more attention to consistency of vocabulary, more checking and more proofreading than the sample. To compensate for this I add on a percentage to the figure I already have. For example, to the hypothetical figure of 20 hours, I might add 20% (ie. 4 hours), to give me a total of 24 hours.

When I first started indexing I failed to add this percentage, and consequently always underestimated

the timed needed for an index.

The exact percentage you decide to add will depend on how you work, and also on the book at hand. I do not always add 20% regardless. For a very technical book, I might add 25%, for a very straightforward book perhaps only 15%. This is something I have only been able to work out through experience, and I suggest that if you use this method you will have to do the same, and not merely adopt the percentages I have given here, because we all work in slightly different ways. Nevertheless, to continue my example, I arrive at a figure of 24 hours for the total index. I then simply multiply this by my hourly rate, which in my case is the Society's recommended rate of $27.50 per hour [note that since this talk was given, the rate has increased to $30 per hour]. This will give me a final figure of

24 x $27.50 = $660

So, the estimate which I quote to the editor is $660.

You may be surprised that I spend so long working out my estimate. However, I have found that it is time well spent. Occasionally, it is true, an editor will reject my quote, and in such cases I have to write off the time spent preparing the estimate (although I do know of one indexer who sends the publisher a bill for time she spent on preparing her quote, along with whatever indexing she has done).

Thankfully, however, this happens rarely, and so the time spent preparing the sample is not wasted time at all, since it is that much less work I need to do when I start the job in earnest.

Costing by number of entries or references
I suppose we can say that this method is a form of payment by results, whereas the method of using an hourly rate is payment for time spent. Preparing an estimate by charging by the number of entries of references is straightforward enough; one simply counts the number of references in the index, and multiplies by the rate per entry. Most indexing software automatically calculates the number of references in an index, so if you are using such software the actual counting is done for you. So, for example, if the index has 1000 references, and one charges 50c per reference, the fee is 1000 x 50c = $500.

The tricky part is deciding what rate you are going to charge per reference: 40c, 50c, 60c? Again, it seems to me that at least initially, the rate has to be determined by comparing it to an equivalent hourly rate for the same job. In other words, if the index with 1000 references took 20 hours, this represents 20 x $27.50 or $550. To reach the same fee charging by the number of entries you would have to charge 550.00/1000 or 55c per entry. Obviously, after this initial calculation, you can charge 55c per entry for subsequent indexes without having to do this comparative arithmetic every time; indeed it would be pointless using this method if you had to.

There are advantages and disadvantages with this method. One advantage may be that it allows the editor to make their own calculation of the total cost of the index. If you can tell the editor that you charge 55c per entry, he or she can mark up several pages and quickly get a rough overall idea of how many entries, and thus how many dollars are involved in the job. Perhaps this demystifies the costing process for editors. It also sounds less intimidating if you say "I charge 55c per entry" rather than "I will charge $550 for this job", even though the total cost involved will be the same.

The big disadvantage with this method, it seems to me, is that it fails to take into account the fact that books differ in complexity and demand different depths of indexing. While 55c per entry might be perfectly satisfactory for a straightforward book on, say, cooking, or gardening, it may be quite unrealistic for a highly technical book on economics or medicine. Unless some sort of adjustable charge per entry can be devised, I can't see a way around this problem.

Costing by number of pages in the index

Assuming that payment is to be made by the number of pages in the published index, there are two ways of calculating the fee:

(a) using a set fee per page

This method involves calculating the fee by fixing an arbitrary piece-work figure, say $60, for each index page. At this rate, an eight page index, double-columned, would cost $480. Again, this may be feasible, if through experience an indexer can come to know how much work is involved per index page, but I am sure that, as with the method of costing by the number of references, some adjustment would have to be made for technical books. This method would also only be feasible if you knew in advance the point size and format of the published index, and that raises the problem of what to do when these vary. For instance, if the charge per page has been calculated with a double-column index set in 8 point in mind, presumably you have to have another charge for indexes of three columns set in 6 point. And what do you do when the page size varies?

b) Costing based on an author's royalties

I must say I have never met or heard of an indexer who uses this method, but I came across it when reading Robert Collison's book on indexing, and mention it to you for what it is worth. Basically the idea is this: whatever payment per page the author's royalties represent, so the indexer is remunerated at the same rate. Take for example, a book of 300 pages, 8 of which comprise the index. Say the publisher prints 5,000 copies and sells them for $30 each, thus making $150,000 in sales. If the author receives 10% in royalties he or she will receive 10% of $150,000 or $15,000. Now, this

$15,000 represents $50 per page for the 300 page book. If the indexer is paid at the same rate, and the index is 8 pages long, he or she will recieve 8 x 50, or $400.

Of course, if this system was used it would hardly be practical to expect the indexer to wait for payment until all 5,000 copies had been sold; rather the fee must be calculated - and paid - on the assumption that the whole printing *will* be sold.

This method is an interesting idea, but it is so complicated that I think one would have difficulty in convincing a publisher to use it; nor might one want to, since indexers are at present better remunerated for their work than most authors, so the adoption of this scheme could well mean a reduction in income! (I think the average income for authors in Australia is about $6,000 per annum.)

II. RELATIONS WITH PUBLISHERS

I would like to mention three issues under the umbrella of relations with publishers:

- the importance of quoting before commencing work
- the issue of being offered a set price by a publisher
- professionalism among indexers with regard to costing

Quoting before commencing work

I think it is of paramount importance - regardless of the method used to cost the index - for the indexer to establish the price of the index in the first instance, before any substantial work is begun, and, if possible, to obtain written confirmation of his or her estimate. In practice, it is true, such confirmation is often difficult to obtain, although sometimes correspondence which passes between indexer and editor may mention the price of the index, and the indexer should at least keep this.

I can perhaps illustrate the pitfalls involved in not doing this by way of an anecdote. I once had the unfortunate experience of preparing an index for a two-volume biography of some 800 pages. In this case the editor took the unusual step of sending me a letter in which I was asked if I would accept $1000 for the job. I replied the fee might be satisfactory, but that I would have to see the page proofs before agreeing to it. I was invited to the editors' office to view the proofs, which turned out to be nearly six inches high. The book contained hundreds of names, and it was quickly obvious that $1000 was not a realistic fee for the job.

However, it was not possible to prepare an accurate quote there in the office, and so all I said was that the job would certainly cost at least three or four hundred dollars more than the $1000 offered, and very possibly more. I was assured that this was not a

problem, and was asked to do the job. I accepted, and, armed with the editor's assurance about cost, neglected to prepare an estimate, and got on with the job. This was my big mistake.

The job turned out to be much bigger than I had thought, and when it started to blow out beyond even the roughly revised estimate, I contacted the editor and informed her. But again I was assured that this was not a problem and asked to continue. When the price reached $1800, I contacted the editor once more, but again was reassured and asked to push on.

Well, the finished job ending up taking almost 100 hours, which represented well over $2000, calculated at the hourly rate I was using at the time. Since it had blown out so much, I compromised and asked the publisher for a fee of $1800. Only *then* was I told that they could only pay $1500. Of course by that time I had done all the work, and the options open to me were twofold: to accept what they were offering, thereby losing several hundred dollars, or refuse and keep the index - that way I would have lots of integrity, but no money. I opted for the money.

I think you will agree that this example shows just how important it is to settle upon a price at the very beginning of the project, and to take the trouble to prepare an estimate no matter what verbal assurances are given.

Set prices for indexes

This story also touches upon the second point: what to do if the publisher offers you a set fee for an index. This often happens when a publisher has only budgeted a set amount for the index. Now, this amount may or may not have anything do do with the amount of work involved in compiling an adequate index. Often it seems to be simply what is left over after everything else has been paid for.

My feeling on this is that I will take on such a job if I think it is feasible, within the given constraints, to produce an index which is still useful to the reader, even if that index is not completely comprehensive, and if it is possible to produce that index in the number of hours which the fee offered represents.

Recently I indexed a 300-page book on the Australian economy. This job had a ceiling of $500, and the index I produced did not include references to the footnotes, nor did it include references to the names of individual countries, which would have required extensive subheadings. However, I think I still produced a useful index, mainly because the job largely involved subject indexing. And I managed to do the index more or less within the eighteen odd hours which $500 represents (I think I actually spent about an hour more than I should have).

You have to be careful here: I certainly wouldn't accept the same fee for a 300-page book on local history crammed with personal names. As difficult as it is to turn down any job, at least for those of us trying to make a living from indexing, sometimes I think it is the best course to take, if taking the job means

working for an absurd hourly rate, or involves severe compromises to one's standards.

Of course, there are also times when a publisher will offer a set fee, but remain open to negotiation. In this case the "set fee" is more of a guideline than a absolute limit.

The safest way here, as always, is not to agree to any fee before seeing the page proofs.

Professionalism regarding costing

The last point I would like to mention tonight is that of professionalism among indexers with regard to costing.

Whatever fees we charge, and however we arrive at those fees, I think we have some professional obligation to take heed of the rates recommended by the Society of Indexers. By this I don't mean that we must accept the recommended figure slavishly, and charge not a penny more or less, but that we should *accept it as a benchmark from which we will set our own fees.* You may want to charge more; you might have high running costs like office rent, and perhaps a computer to pay off. You may want to charge a little less; perhaps you index with cards and don't feel you should charge as much as someone who works more quickly because they use a computer.

Whatever we charge, I don't think we can expect to be treated seriously as professionals until we show some consensus about fees. To do this I think we have to eradicate the "hobby" mentality that some indexers seem to have. By this I mean the attitude that because one is only indexing part-time, or to supplement other income, one needn't charge anything remotely resembling the recommended rate. You may know the sort of thing: "Oh, I don't really think of the money, I just love indexing *so* much..."

However, in my opinion, whether one indexes full-time or part-time should have no effect on the fees one charges. Indexers like these are surely doing the profession a disservice, because they undermine the credibility of their colleagues who are charging the recommended rate. If you undervalue your own skills as an indexer, you're not just cheating yourself, but you are also undervaluing the skills of your colleagues.

Garry Cousins
NSW President

THE USE OF PREPOSITIONS IN INDEXING

The general rule appears to be that 'prepositions should be used only if their absence might cause ambiguity'[1]

The expression 'should', rather than 'may' indicates some compulsion, but this is not always accepted.[2] In addition to likely ambiguity, the question of necessity may arise. Some consider the use of prepositions as necessary to remove ambiguity, others consider the use of prepositions as superfluous. Knight[3] comes to an ideal formulation when (in discussing

the use of prepositions in relation to headings and subheadings), he says

'...they must clearly have a logical relationship to the main heading. In a well-constructed index they should also bear a close grammatical relationship. In other words it should be possible to make good grammatical sense by joining the heading and subheading in the normal order of the combined phrase...*Some indexers look upon these particles as ungainly knobs and excrescences to be hacked off. In doing so, they may plead they are saving space; but the result is often ambiguity*' [emphasis added].

It gives me the impression that Knight is saying, the use of prepositions is necessary in order to prevent ambiguity rather than that they should be used only if their absence results in ambiguity, as BS3700 does.

The ANSI standard[4] ignores headings, and says that 'subheadings should begin or end with prepositions or conjunctions only if necessary for clarity'. The *Chicago Manual of Style*[5] states that 'subheadings must be related logically to headings, and sometimes can be related grammatically, so that the heading and subheading form a meaningful phrase, such as 'Statistical material: units of measure in'. (Note inverted usage.) The latter's reference to prepositions (and conjunctions, which should be considered in this context) is subsumed in the term 'grammatically', and the supporting example. In my submission, the *Chicago Manual* gives sound advice. The AGPS *Style Manual*[6] does not comment (in the Chapter on Indexing), nor am I aware of any other comment on the subject in Australia, and would be glad to be put on notice if any exists.

Cecilia Wittman[7], in the course of comparing award-winning indexes with other indexes, says, 'award-winning indexes generally do not end with prepositions; that is they are topical subheadings (such as 'Lucknow: military problems posed by capture'), not indirect order subheadings (such as 'Marseilles: weights of'). Whereas these end with prepositions only when needed for clarity[8], the subheadings in non-award winning indexes frequently end with non-essential prepositions.' This view seems to emphasise necessity (as Knight does) rather than ambiguity and to follow the American school of thought, as expressed in the *Chicago Manual*.

The British Standards recommendations for the use of prepositions when dealing with personal or geographical names is not so clear. In para 5.3.3.3, we are told that 'where the article or preposition does not form an integral part of a *name*[9] [emphasis added] it should be omitted,' but in relation to the title of a document, para 5.3.4.3, says that 'a preposition at the beginning...should be retained'. The Standard also says, at para 5.3.4.2, that 'the article should be transposed when it begins the title of a document'.[10] [I must emphasise that I find the numbering system of this document unnecessarily confusing. A simpler system would have been much preferred].

A preposition is a word (or part of speech) which serves to mark the relation between two notional words (substantive or pronoun); it governs the following substantive or pronoun. It is also a word or particle prefixed to another word.[11] For example, 'remedies for diseases'. The preposition 'for' serves to show the relationship between the governed word 'diseases' and the other word 'remedies'.

Diseases
remedies for asthma, bronchitis, cholera (etc.)

[3 separate entries]

Without the use of the preposition here the index entry may read as if any or all of the subheadings 'asthma, bronchitis, cholera' are remedies for diseases.

In my submission, it can be concluded that when prepositions are necessarily (or correctly) used (ie. in entries or sub-entries) they should be accepted in indexes. This brings me to the form of their usage.

There is a body of opinion that does not approve of inverted subentries; or to put it more precisely, direct rather than inverted subentries are preferred, with the prepositions being used in front of the governing word, whether or not alphabetical sequence is interrupted. Preference is the emphatic word, because there are times when inverted subheadings cannot be ruled out or considered inelegant. The index to the AGPS *Style Manual* (note 6 above) chooses the direct style consistently. No criticism is meant, but at times this consistency approaches what may be described as an unnecessary level. For example:

editor, identification of

   in bibliographies

   in title page

   in references

It can be asked whether the preposition is necessary in any of the subheadings. There are a number of other headings in which the same question may be asked. The answer may be that they are not wrong but are they necessary? Would their absence result in ambiguity? If the preposition is retained in the heading, I think all the prepositions in the subheadings may be omitted, without the fear of any ambiguity or doubt as to what is meant.

The observations of two assessors of applications for registration of indexers,[12] is relevant in this respect. One of them said, 'there were too many prepositions in subheadings'. A second assessor reported that the use of prepositions in subheadings if 'carried to excess would affect the comprehensibility of the alphabetical sequence'. It is difficult to draw conclusions from either of these remarks by the assessors, as they were not supported by sufficient examples.[13] If the use of prepositions in uninverted format is preferred, how can there be too many? What does 'too many' or 'carried to excess' mean, so long as the indexer is consistent, as is the index to the AGPS *Style Manual* mentioned above.

The real purpose of this contribution (and the research that went into it, which may not have been exhaustive) is to explore the subject, and perhaps engender some useful comment on the use of prepositions under Australian standards. For the present I am left with an uneasy feeling that indexing was somewhere described as an inexact science. On the other hand it may just be that the rules are not clear and concise enough, or can we take comfort from Hazel Bell's assertion that 'indexing is an art, not a science'.[14] She also places emphasis on the fact that 'The model index framework is standard, but each text is unique, and it is in relating the specific text to the normal structure that individual skills and judgment come into play'.

1 *British Standards* 3700: 1988, 5.2.3.4

2 See Note 3 for a contrary view, and see Note 12 below on assessment of indexes

3 Knight, Norman: *Indexing, the art of* 57

4 See Basic Criteria for Indexers mentioned in the article by Cecelia Wittman in *The Indexer* 17(1) (April 1990) 3

5 See the same article by Cecelia Wittman in which she mentions this document

6 *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* 1988 (4th ed), Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, ch 19

7 *The Indexer* 17(1) (April 1990) 3 at 5

8 ANSI Standard; Note 4 above

9 See para 5.3.3.3; the indexer of the BS comes to the rescue and places this subentry under geographical names, but I would have preferred the subpara. to be expressed precisely as are the two preceding subparas.

10 A document is defined in BS 3700: 1988, 2.2, as 'any item that presents information'

11 *Shorter Oxford* or *Macquarie* dictionaries

12 *The Indexer* 15(2) (October 1986) 87, 88

13 This was doubtless deliberate to preserve the confidentiality of the applicants

14 *The Indexer* 15(3) (April 1987) 129 (editorial)

Kingsley Siebel

NO CARDS, NO PROGRAM ELECTRONIC INDEXING

I am not too old to learn, but it's too much trouble to learn yet another software program for indexing purposes - and I'm a slow learner. I also think they are more complicated than the system I have devised. Instead, about 4 years ago I purchased Xerox Ventura (VP), a Postscript language used mainly for desktop publishing (and which may be known to many readers of this *Newsletter*). It was recommended to me as the best system to meet what was then a difficult task of writing and publishing legislative material, with annotations. Almost every para of every page called for different attributes such as indentation, alignment, spacing; different types of headings, tables, columns (often of uneven width) etc., and at times a change of font. Very soon I found I could produce any combination of such material using preset "tags" (a simple, and modifiable, one-key command structure which carried in memory a number of attributes) as I required to change format. Those who are familiar with VP will know that it can very easily produce any different style sheet for different types of work, which can include a page format of a given size, running heads, automatic pagination etc. It also has an index facility which I explored, but never used, because I have been able to simplify the exercise. VP was only one of my blessings; the other was an A4 screen which made it possible to create an Index-Style-sheet with double column and as many levels of indentation as I require (most of my indexing is technical material and this is preferred to the run-on style), with the use of coded tab keys.

This system *immediately replaced all my cards*, but the priciples of the card system are retained and applied electronically, so that it became a delight rather than a chore.

When I want to produce an index (having completed my first reading of the document, and manually noting the more important main headings) I sit before my machine, call up VP, load Index-Style, and in a few seconds I have a full page double column frame waiting for my first card (entry) to be written direct to the screen. This full page, of 60 or more lines in each column, is visible at all times. If required the style sheet can be of 3 columns and I have all before me. At the top I type the word "Index" and point my mouse cursor to a tag which gives me a stylized heading which can be altered at will. Immediately below I can create a frame (across the width of the page) to contain a preliminary note, and the double column dips down to make room for this. With the document beside me I am ready to start indexing.

I will illustrate from a recent index. The first entry which the document presented to me was

Financial instruments

--bank overdraft 3

This was inserted, at the top of column 1, with the heading flush left and the subheading indented with a tab equal to 2 preordained spaces. The next entry which presented itself in the document was "Commercial bills". This was a subheading under "Bank(s)", so the entry was made just above the first entry, by creating a space with the Enter key
Bank(s)
--bill financing 4
Commercial bills - *see* Bank(s), bill financing
The third heading arising from the document was Reserve Bank. My list of headings suggested that a

corresponding heading was Monetary policy, so the two entries were placed next in position, without having to create a space, to preserve alphabetical order

Monetary policy *see also* Reserve Bank

Reserve Bank - *see also* Monetary policy

--control by 6

The 4th entry was involved with the discussion of cheques within a payments system in commercial dealings. A definition of a cheque was contained in the paragraph of text immediately following. The entries were

Payments system - *see also* Cheques (placed immediately above Reserve Bank), and

Cheques (placed immediately before commercial bills)

--definition 7

I now have the beginnings of an index arranged strictly in alpha order and complete with cross-references, reading as follows:

Bank(s)

--bill financing 4

Cheques

--definition 7

Commercial bills - *see* Bank(s), bill financing

Financial instruments

--bank overdraft 3

Monetary policy - *see also* Reserve Bank

Payments system - *see also* Cheques

Reserve Bank - *see also* Monetary policy

--control by 6

The index continues to grow. The first column builds up in no time, and without effort on my part the next entry is displayed at the top of col. 2, when col. 1 is full. Within a short time, as I am able to move through the pages of the document, the first two columns of page 1 are full. VP places the next entry at the top of col. 1 of page 2. Otherwise, my next entry may be a subentry under an earlier heading, and when space is created for this (whether in col. 1 or 2 of page 1), the last entry in col. 2 is pushed out to page 2. At this stage I can survey page 1 or go straight on to page 2 and insert a continuation line. That line will not stay in that position for long, but it

is good sense to place it so that it is not overlooked. As progress is made it is a simple process to alter it as necessary or to put it back at the top of col. 1 on page 2, by using "cut and paste". This deletes the continuation line from where it is, holds it in memory and inserts it once more, as directed, at the top of col. 1. In my survey of page 1 at this stage I usually look for typing errors and vertical alignment (as this is a weakness of VP, (which is claimed will be put right in the next version). This is done by using the space bar or the backspace key. Both these keys seem to sense what is required at this time and move the words only proportionately to achieve correct vertical range.

As I gradually move from entry to entry, column to column, and page to page the index is constantly being built up with all cross-references and location references being entered. In a lengthy index, alpha order within a large number of subheadings may get mixed up but these are easily put right by using "cut and paste" (ie. rearranging my cards). The first entry, Financial instruments, which was at that time at the top of col. 1 page 1 may now be on page 3, col. 2, and Reserve Bank may have moved into its correct position on page 7, with other entries following it. The joy of this building process is that I had no hand in arranging the cards, putting them in place or sorting them in any way. It has all happened, and I could see it happen at all times, and make instant alterations instead of waiting for a later time.

My manual list of headings may be noted up by inserting page numbers against the first of each in alpha order, so that I can flip from page to page as is necessary for my very next entry. For this, I just press CTRL G, which asks me what page I want, and, on instructing VP, I can view the pages being turned back or forward until it stops at the required one, when the next entry is slotted in.

I can print out a draft index for the purpose of editing at any time, but I usually do a preliminary survey on the screen.

I always do the work described above in a 10pt font which makes easy reading of the screen. When editing and correction is complete I merely change the font to 8pt (if so required). The entire index restructures itself. There are two matters that need attention as a result: (a) adjustment of lines which may have needed wrap around in 10pt but may not need this in 8pt, and (b) checking that the continuation lines at the top of even pages are in position and contain the correct information as these are also affected by the conversion to smaller size type.

As an additional blessing I had invested in a laser printer at the time when I purchased my system for the work I was doing. This too is a bonus now as I can supply a bromide if required or a disk from which reproduction and reformat can be undertaken.

If a publisher gives me his specifications all these can be provided for, such as page size, text area, column size, font, etc. There is no danger that the printer may move one page and forget to alter the loca-

tors, or print wrap around lines incorrectly, or get the continuation lines wrong. These are hazards which all indexers encounter, but which can be prevented by co-operation between publisher and indexer, and can be foolproof with my simple system.

There is one snag. The system when purchased cost about $13,000, but at that time the Taxman was kinder than he is now and it was all written off in 3 years (accelerated depreciation). Both hardware and software are cheaper now, and the laser which was the most expensive item is not all that necessary.

I think I am on to something simple yet quite efficient; I use cards when I'm not using them. A friend who is recognised as a very good indexer, described my system as - "heaven sent".

Kingsley Siebel

REGISTER OF INDEXERS

From enquiries received it would appear useful to provide some brief notes regarding the Register of Indexers and the Registration process, particularly for the information of new members. The Register records those members of the Society whose practical ability in the compilation of indexes has been assessed and formally recognised by the Society as of professional standard. Assessment is carried out by a Panel of Assessors appointed by the Committee of the Society. Josephine McGovern is currently Chair of the Panel in the absence of John Simkin. The Panel may also co-opt other Registered Indexers to assist with assessment where a particular specialised area of expertise is needed.

Applicants for admission to the Register are required to:

(a) complete and submit an application form, which includes details of qualifications, specialist indexing fields, and details of the index to be assessed.

(b) submit an index, together with the text to which it applies, that in the applicant's judgement is a sufficient example of the professional status of the applicant's work. Published indexes are preferred.

(c) submit detailed notes on any constraints influencing the index (such as conditions imposed by a publisher), which will be taken into account by the Panel.

(d) make a payment, currently $30, which is set to defray costs associated with processing the application.

Results of an assessment will normally be advised within three months of a submission. Successful applicants receive an official inscribed parchment Certificate of Registration. Unsuccessful applicants may re-apply for Registration not less than 6 months after the Panel's adjudication. Registered Indexers are designated as such in *Indexers available,* the publication from which publishers and others seek indexers for commissions. It is therefore in the interests of indexers to be admitted to the Register to demonstrate formal recognition of their professional competence.

Those members of the Society intending to submit an index for assessment can obtain an application form by contacting the Secretary.

Ian Odgers

INDEXING TRAINING WORKSHOP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

An indexing training workshop was convened by John Simkin on 4 December last year at the University of New South Wales. The purpose of the workshop was to exchange information about indexing training courses currently available in Australia, and to discuss the feasibility of introducing a tertiary level qualification in indexing. Ten delegates attended: five from Sydney, four from Melbourne and Elizabeth Wallis, Chair of the British Society of Indexers.

Evidence presented at the all-day workshop suggested that courses presently being offered at tertiary level in librarianship and information science contained elements which could probably be adapted to fit the Society's training needs.

However, delegates agreed that a better knowledge of both employers' and indexers' needs was required before further planning of courses for indexers could proceed. To that end a committee has been formed in Sydney to plan a strategy for conducting a market survey to ascertain these needs.

The National Executive has also decided to investigate the training possibilities presented by the recent establishment of the Industry Training Council in Victoria, and the national Training Guarantee Scheme.

Garry Cousins

BRISBANE MEETING OF INDEXERS

A meeting of Brisbane-based indexers has been organised at a city restaurant for the evening of Wednesday 29 May. Whether you are a member of AusSI or just have an interest in indexing please come along and make yourself known. Max McMaster (President of AusSI) will be attending the meeting, so if you have any questions about indexing please bring them along and we'll try to answer them.

For further details about the venue please contact either of our two AusSI Brisbane correspondents: Jean Dartnell on (07) 371 0675 or Mary Anne Secker on (07) 391 3686 (B) or (07) 209 4527 (H) by Friday 24 May so that a booking can be made.

GENERAL MEETING: INDEXING AS A BUSINESS

A tentative date of 28 May was given in the last Newsletter. Please note that this has now been changed. **The General Meeting will be held at 6 for 6.30 pm on Monday 27 May at the office of the Australian Society of Accountants, 170 Queen Street, Melbourne.**

An accountant will talk about taxation aspects of indexing, and following this Kerry Herbstreit will speak on 'Quoting for an index'.

POSITION VACANT

PROJECT OFFICER
Victorian Legislation Subject Index

VICTORIA LAW FOUNDATION
AND
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL
VICTORIA

THE PROJECT

To prepare a subject matter index of Victorian legislation. The index will be progressively updated and published by the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel.

This new initiative will require:

- compilation of a thesaurus
- establishment of indexing principles
- indexing of the subject-matter of approximately 500 Acts.

The project is funded by the Victoria Law Foundation and will be based in the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. It is scheduled to start by mid-1991 and to be completed within 12 months.

THE PERSON

The successful applicant will be a self-starter with highly developed communication and language skills who is able to work to committed time-lines.

The position would ideally suit an indexer with legal skills, a legally qualified person with indexing skills, or a librarian with a legal background.

Computer skills are highly desirable and a knowledge of Victorian law would be a distinct advantage.

The project officer will work closely with the Manager of the Legislative Information Services of the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. A small Steering Committee will be responsible for overseeing the project.

SALARY

Approximately $38,500

APPLICATIONS

Closing date is 29 April 1991. Further information and a duty statement containing selection criteria may be obtained from:

Barbara Crisp
Manager, Legislative Information Services
Tel: 603 6716

Written application, addressing the selection criteria and including details of experience, qualifications and the names of two referees, should be sent to:

Personnel Manager
18th Floor
200 Queen Street
MELBOURNE, VIC 3000

STOP PRESS

Applications for the above position are due in on 29 April, however, Barbara Crisp has indicated that she would like interested persons to telephone her after this date if necessary.